

**Comfort Women:
FAQs we should all know**

INTRODUCTION

Americans value truth and justice. There is now, however, a misconception that has been repeated so often by certain groups – and disseminated via the media and Internet – that the true facts have become obscured. Even erroneous government reports and resolutions have been issued, with references traceable to a limited number of faulty sources.

The misconception is that all "comfort women" of Imperial Japan were kidnapped or forcibly conscripted by the Japanese military, and that they were all treated as "sex slaves." Yes, it is difficult to believe, but these are elaborate exaggerations, propagated by people with agendas. These prevarications have been repeated so many times that many people now believe them.

During the first half of the last century, poverty was widespread in much of Asia, including Korea and Japan. Many families, especially farm families and those in rural areas, struggled to survive and were in debt, forcing families to make sacrifices unimaginable today. This stark economic reality, along with the patriarchal nature of Korean society, created an environment where young women desperately desired an opportunity for a different life. This backdrop provides the context needed to understand the events.

(1) The vast majority of Korean comfort women were sent by their impoverished families to pay off family debts or joined of their own accord – though many may have been misled about the nature of the job by *civilian* recruiters.

(2) Comfort women were often paid (or their families had been paid) and could go home when they had paid off their debt or their obligations were met. As such, their situation was vastly different from slavery of antebellum America.

(3) There were, however, isolated cases where local military commanders forcibly acquired women in territory Japan occupied during the war. Such an incident occurred in Indonesia; but, when a higher ranking Japanese officer discovered this, the women were released from this situation and the violating officers later punished. This small percent of women 'forcibly recruited' by the military were the exceptions rather than the rule: their unfortunate situation has been misapplied to all comfort women. Additional details and references are presented in the next section: FAQs.

To further confound the facts, some groups have been spreading disinformation that Japan has neither apologized nor paid any compensation to comfort women. In fact, the Government of Japan issued a formal apology in 1993; Japanese officials at the highest levels (including prime ministers) have personally apologized; and, Japan and Japanese have paid compensation before 2015 (see next section).

For true justice, one must investigate exhaustively, with an open mind, until facts can be discerned from fiction. Anyone who has studied the Middle East knows that if only one side were allowed to present their version of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the story would be drastically different from that of the other side. Those who seek justice must always be wary.

Justice depends on the ability to discern facts from fiction, and this is the purpose of this report.

FAQs

Why would young women voluntarily want to become comfort women?

Unbeknownst to most Westerners, many people in Korea and Japan lived in extreme poverty during the first half of the 20th Century; large numbers of families had difficulty subsisting. Working as a comfort woman was one way for destitute women to survive under this stark economic reality. (Ref. 2 and 3) Further, the patriarchal nature of Korean society, where daughters were often under-appreciated and given little autonomy, was also a contributing factor. (Ref. 3a)

A point that has been often ignored is the fact that *many comfort women were from Japan*. However, the Japanese comfort women experience has been rarely discussed in English-language documents.

Why on earth would Korean families send their children to become comfort women?

As mentioned above, many families in Korea were impoverished and in debt. In order to pay off their debts, parents (often the father) offered the services of their children, and received payment. (Ref. 2, 3) Historically, this type of practice was very common in Korea and in other parts of Asia (e.g., sending daughters to become live-in baby sitters, maids, and such, in exchange for advance payment). Although less common, boys were also sent as indentured servants or workers. In addition, some daughters were sent to “*kisaeng*” houses, where young women learned to become entertainers. Prostitution was legal at the time, and some parents sent their daughters to brothels, via a broker. This practice, though tragic, allowed families to receive money to survive. Some people have stated that these parents “sold” their daughters, which may have contributed to the misconception that they would be treated as “slaves”, and thus were “sex slaves.”

Did the Imperial Japanese military directly kidnap, abduct, or conscript women for comfort women service?

No, this is *false* in *most* cases (the exceptions were described in the introduction). In Korea, many recruiters/agents were *Korean* men. Because Korea had been part of Japan for decades, many Korean men had adopted Japanese names and could speak Japanese flawlessly. (Ref. 3) Moreover, recruiters sometimes wore uniforms that resembled Japanese military uniforms, and were fulfilling the needs of the military. Combined, these factors may have contributed to the misconception that the Japanese military directly recruited all of the comfort women. There were isolated cases where *civilian* agents/recruiters in Korea attempted to forcibly take women, but this was illegally done, and Japanese authorities freed women who were taken in this manner when discovered on the Korean peninsula.

Why would some people exaggerate the stories about comfort women?

In 1910, Korea was annexed by Japan, and became part of Japan until the end of the Second World War (WWII). Some Koreans harbored deep resentment, as well as jealousy, toward Japan, while others accepted, even embraced, Japan. Unfortunately, in recent times, the state-run school system in S. Korea has been teaching selective history, emphasizing the negatives aspects of Japanese rule and promoting anti-Japanese sentiment. Strongly indoctrinated people often prefer to remain ignorant and spread misinformation. In actual fact, during WWII, many Koreans voluntarily joined the Japanese military and served in the Japanese military as soldiers, as well as officers. For example, Chung-Hee Park, the father of the current President of S. Korea (Geun-Hye Park), was an officer in the Imperial Japanese military. (Ref. 1)

Unfortunately, there are those who gain by spreading misinformation, such as politicians seeking approval, attorneys who profit in lawsuits, journalists who embellish the facts, activists whose once idealistic visions have become distorted, and, sadly, hate groups.

Were recruiters/agents dishonest when informing women about the job of comfort women?

Some recruiters, many of whom were Korean, were not completely honest about the nature of the job of comfort women. When joining, some women assumed they would be doing "work connected with visiting the wounded in hospitals, rolling bandages, and generally making the soldiers happy." (Ref. 2) So, there is a basis to say that some women were tricked into becoming comfort women. Also, as parents offered the services of their children to pay off debt, this may be construed, by some, as being "forced" or "coerced" to become comfort women. However, being deceived by agents or "forced" by one's parents is completely different from being kidnapped, abducted, or conscripted.

Were comfort women allowed to go home after fulfilling the contract?

Yes. Korean comfort women could go home after fulfilling their contract (often one to a several years) or paying off their debt. (Ref. 2) Some women chose to continue, as the pay was much better than most jobs. Most brothels, however, were owned and operated by civilians (Korean and Japanese), and the women were often dependent on the integrity of these owners. Toward the end of the war, as Allied forces cut off transportation routes, traveling home, however, became more difficult.

How were the work conditions for comfort women?

The treatment and work conditions for the comfort women depended on the civilian brothel proprietor, and varied from location to location: some comfort women were treated relatively well; others, poorly.

Here is a description of conditions for a group of comfort women stationed in Burma: A comfort women's average age was about twenty-five years old. These comfort women earned approximately 750 yen per month, lived and worked in conditions similar to an upscale brothel, and were in good health. By comparison, a low-ranking Japanese soldier earned 10 yen per month; thus, a comfort woman earned potentially 75 times more than some Japanese soldiers. They had time to participate in recreational activities: "While in Burma they amused themselves by participating in sports events with both officers and men; and attended picnics, entertainments, and social dinners. They had a phono-graph; and in the towns they were allowed to go shopping." Most significantly, comfort women "*were allowed the prerogative of refusing a customer.*" Certain women "*who had paid their debt could return home.*" (Ref. 2) Further details are described in Ref. 2.

Were the comfort women abused, beaten, or tortured by the Imperial Japanese military?

Not in general. Comfort women were considered a valuable element for the military's well-being, and were generally treated very well by the soldiers: "There were numerous instances of proposals of marriage and in certain cases marriages actually took place." (Ref. 2) However, incidents of *abuse by the civilian brothel operators*, who managed the comfort stations and were often Korean, occurred perhaps even more often than abuse by individual unruly soldiers. The abusive behavior by the civilian brothel operators and *individual* soldiers has been inappropriately generalized to the Japanese military.

Some claim that most comfort women were killed at the end of the war by Japanese

forces. This claim is dubious, and apparently arose after a left-wing Japanese politician (Seijiro Arafune) made wild claims for political reasons after the war, which were then parroted. During the war, as a result of cultural misunderstanding, wartime enmity, and propaganda, many Japanese soldiers believed that American forces would abuse and violate captured women. On Pacific islands, when facing capture or defeat, Japanese troops often killed themselves, and many Japanese troops believed it would be better for accompanying civilians, including women, not to be captured alive – so as to not be tortured and/or raped by Americans.

Some former Korean comfort women have stated that they were "abducted," "coerced," or "forced." Did this happen?

Korean women did not publically declare that they were abducted, coerced, or forcibly recruited *by the military* until well after a Japanese man, Seiji Yoshida, falsely claimed that he rounded up Korean women forcefully in a 1983 book. The media coverage some years later (e.g., by Asahi Newspaper) appears to have set off the chain of events, including lawsuits against the Japanese government. Yoshida's book was later discredited as being a hoax.

Scientific studies have demonstrated that "false" memories occur, e.g., eye-witnesses will "remember erroneously events and details that did not occur," depending on who asks the question, how the question is asked, and under what circumstances the question is asked. (Ref. 4) Moreover, recent research has confirmed that memories can be "re-written," under certain conditions. (Ref. 4b) These phenomena appear to be the case with several former comfort women who seemingly validate Yoshida's tale, as their testimonials have changed over the years. Many former Korean comfort women whose stories were recorded before the comfort women issue became publicized worldwide indicated that they were "sold" by their parents to pay off family debt or became comfort women of their own accord (albeit possibly deceived about the nature of work by civilian brokers).

There were a small number of exceptions, e.g., women in Indonesia (as mentioned above) and in the Philippines. It is important to recognize the distinction between comfort women from Imperial Japan (i.e., Japan, Korea, and Taiwan) and women acquired illicitly by soldiers in territories Japan occupied during the war.

A small number of Korean women were illegally abducted by brokers/agents, many of whom were Korean and possibly misidentified as Japanese military (due their Japanese-language ability, their use of Japanese names, and that they may have worn military-like uniforms). The possibility that a small number of local government personnel (e.g., police, soldiers) conducting such activity in Korea, illicitly, also cannot be ruled out.

More recently, it should never be forgotten that before the US invaded Iraq in 2003, witnesses 'testified' that Saddam Hussein had a viable weapons-of-mass-destruction program, fabricating stories of remarkable detail and credibility. Clearly, they did not tell the truth.

Why is there the belief that very young girls were conscripted to become comfort women?

For the war effort, the Imperial Japanese government recruited Korean and Japanese civilians to work in factories, e.g., make munitions, etc. (Ref. 3) They were called "Teishintai" ("Volunteer [labor] Corps," "*chongsindae*" in Korean), and these recruits did include young girls (e.g., toward the end of the war, female Japanese between ages 12 - 39 were mobilized for this labor force). The number of these recruits was reported as 200,000 by some sources. This Volunteer Corps was distinct from the comfort women

system. However, the two systems were conflated by reporters in newspapers (e.g., Asahi Newspaper and others) and became the basis for the inaccurate statement: "200,000 girls and women were 'forced' to become 'sex slaves.'"

Documents substantiate that comfort women were typically in their twenties, with the youngest seventeen years old. (Ref. 2, 3) Still, the possibility that impoverished and desperate fathers sold younger daughters and unscrupulous civilian agents misreported ages is highly likely.

Did Japan apologize and pay compensation to Korea and comfort women before 2015?

Yes. These facts have been drowned out by a massive misinformation campaign by certain Korean groups, and the details are more complex than commonly known. In 1965, Japan and S. Korea signed a treaty and concomitant agreement that normalized relations and settled any and all grievances (Ref. 5): Japan provided S. Korea \$800 million in payment, loans, and assets as reparation – equivalent to billions of today's dollars. This Agreement settled, "completely and finally," all issues and claims between Japan and S. Korea. Specifically, the Treaty states, in Article II, paragraph 1:

"The High Contracting Parties confirm that the problems concerning property, rights, and interests of the two High Contracting Parties and their peoples (including juridical persons) and the claims between the High Contracting Parties and between their peoples, including those stipulated in Article IV(a) of the Peace Treaty with Japan signed at the city of San Francisco on September 8, 1951, have been settled completely and finally."

Because this mutually-agreed-upon treaty explicitly states that both nations "confirm that the problems...and interests" of both nations and "their peoples" and "the claims between" both nations and "between their peoples...have been settled completely and finally," it became the S. Korean government's responsibility to compensate Korean comfort women, which it failed to do.

The treaty details were negotiated between S. Korea and Japan over a period of nearly fifteen YEARS (1951-1965). Thus, it was more than sufficient time to bring up all grievances. The comfort women were never brought up as an issue; and, therefore, there was no mention of comfort women in the treaty, consistent with the S. Korean government's concerns. If nearly 200,000 Korean girls and women were kidnapped, enslaved, and raped (as some claim), it seems unfathomable that the S. Korean government would ignore them in a treaty that was designed to settle all claims "completely and finally."

Nevertheless, Japan and Japanese people went above and beyond their international legal obligation to make amends when the comfort women issue heated up as a result of publication of inaccurate stories and reports arising from Yoshida's false claim that he abducted Korean women. To diffuse the growing criticism from the S. Korean people and government, the Japanese government made an official apology: on August 4, 1993, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yohei Kono, as part of a more comprehensive apology, stated the following: "The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women." (Ref. 6)

The wording of the comprehensive apology was done in collaboration with S. Koreans to satisfy their wishes in hope that there would finally be resolution to this issue. To Japan's chagrin, by using wording to please S. Korea, the apology created misunderstandings

observed today, where Japan appears to have admitted that the Imperial Japanese military high command authorized certain systematic conduct that it had actually not done.

Moreover, even though the 1965 treaty freed Japan from claims by S. Korea and S. Korean people (and the reparations should have been paid to comfort women by the Korean government), Japan and Japanese paid compensation to former comfort women to atone for the actions of the Japanese militarists. Specifically, Japan and Japanese people created what was called the "Asian Women's Fund" in 1994 and paid millions of dollars in compensation to comfort women.

Unfortunately, many former Korean comfort women rejected the compensation because of pressure from an anti-Japanese Korean organization known as "Chong Dae Hyop" and because of media pressure, thereby giving anti-Japanese groups a means to claim that comfort women were never compensated by Japan.

Because the Japanese government had already fulfilled the 1965 treaty and paid the S. Korean government for all claims by its citizens, the Japanese government did not wish to appear as if Japan had not fulfilled the treaty terms, and instead created the Asian Women's Fund. One can envision the Japanese government thinking something like, "We already paid compensation via our 1965 Treaty, so it is not right for the Japanese government to redress Korean comfort women individually when we (S. Korea and Japan) had agreed that the S. Korean government would compensate their citizens with the funds we provided; however, as the S. Korean government did not fulfill their obligations, we will mediate the compensation of comfort women." Honoring the 1965 treaty restricted much of the Japanese government's subsequent actions, and made it more difficult to directly compensate the women.

Are certain groups and individuals deceiving the world?

Sadly, yes. Those deceiving the world include politicians with self-serving goals, anti-Japanese organizations (non-government organizations, NGOs), certain historians pushing their perspectives, activists who exaggerate claims to win support for their cause, lawyers who present selected facts to win cases, reporters who sensationalized the stories, some comfort women who had been coerced to deceive by anti-Japanese groups like Chong Dae Hyop, elements within the S. Korean government, and certain Japanese leftists. All these groups ignore or dismiss (i) the 1965 treaty between S. Korea and Japan, (ii) apologies by Japan and Japanese officials, (iii) the compensation by Japan and Japanese, and (iv) documented facts related to comfort women. These groups clearly have self-serving motives and agendas, whereby vilifying Japan advances their agendas.

As a result of constant pressure – and even coaching (Ref. 3) – from anti-Japanese groups, it is likely that some former comfort women who have provided testimonial narratives today have false memories or their memories have been changed through a process called "reconsolidation." (Ref. 4b) Thus, some may truly believe what they are saying, even if it did not happen. What woman would want to remember being sold or forced by her father or being so poor that this was the only way to survive? Wouldn't one be happier to remember, "The Japanese military forced me!" – especially when that is what nearly everyone is saying?

What is an appropriate way to describe comfort women?

This is complex. As described above, most Korean comfort women were either "sold" by their families or joined on their own (perhaps after being deceived by civilian agents). So, for these women, a reasonably accurate description is 'indentured' prostitutes under contracts, accompanying military units, who could go home after fulfilling their contract or

after their debt was paid. (Ref. 2) The small fraction of women in the occupied territories (e.g., Indonesia, Philippines) who were ‘forced’ should be considered differently and separately; these women in Indonesia were released after about two months by Japanese military authorities, when their situation was discovered by a higher ranking officer. The personnel responsible were later brought to justice.

How did all this misinformation start and spread?

Ironically, it was the Japanese, themselves: specifically, a Japanese man named Seiji Yoshida claimed that he rounded up Korean women forcefully. Like in the US, different Japanese hold different views: some are liberals, conservatives, moderates, ‘anti-establishment,’ etc. When Yoshida’s 1983 memoir became the interest of a left-leaning Japanese newspaper (Asahi Shimbun), they (e.g., reporter Takashi Uemura – who was married to a S. Korean woman, Sun In Yang) wrote a series of articles based on the book and selective evidence. Yang’s mother was involved a lawsuit against Japan over comfort women compensation, and there was a clear conflict-of-interest for reporter Uemura; reporter Uemura had a vested interest in spinning the story a certain way.

The stories in Yoshida’s book turned out to be complete fabrications. Asahi Newspaper, years later, admitted that several of their news articles were incorrect, and retracted them. However, after Asahi Newspaper’s articles were published in the early 1990’s, this news created a firestorm of protest in South Korea, as well as in Japan. Subsequent on-site investigations by researchers, journalists, and others demonstrated that the events in his book could not be corroborated by anyone who lived on the island where Yoshida claimed the events had occurred. In the mid-1990s, Yoshida, himself, admitted that his account was fiction; it was never learned why he fabricated his stories – perhaps a desire for fame and fortune and/or a dislike of the Japanese establishment. Unfortunately, the avalanche of protest and hatred created by Yoshida and Asahi Newspaper spread rapidly, resulting in various activists and organizations *ignoring the later facts* disproving Yoshida’s story and Asahi’s articles. Anti-Japanese groups, leftist Japanese organizations, attorneys pushing lawsuits, politicians seeking votes, and certain activists further exaggerated and spread the misinformation, creating a ‘snowball’ effect since then.

Even the highly inflammatory and provocative phrase “sex slave” is thought to have been started by Japanese attorneys involved in lawsuits against the Japanese government, and was disseminated internationally by a Japanese attorney, Etsuro Totsuka, seeking to win empathy for their clients and maximize compensation.

If news organizations and others of influence propagated a certain view, is it possible that average people would believe it? In modern times, how was it possible for well-meaning Americans to believe (and spread) the lie that Saddam Hussein possessed a dangerous WMD program (which was then used as a pretext to invade Iraq)? Why did the people who claimed that Iraq had WMDs lie?

What key reports used erroneous, fabricated, biased, or questionable source materials?

- (a) George Hicks’ 1995 book “The Comfort Women”;
- (b) Radhika Coomaraswamy’s 1996 U.N. Commission on Human Rights report;
- (c) United States House Resolution 121 (passing in 2007).

Revealingly, (c) cites (b) and other earlier sources; (b) cites (a) and earlier sources; (a) relies almost totally on evidence gathered by a *single* activist of Korean descent, who “found about 80 per cent of the material (much of it exceedingly obscure) used in the writing of this book.” Thus, all these documents can be traced back, directly or indirectly,

to the mendacious Seiji Yoshida, the inaccurate Asahi Newspaper articles, the subsequent testimonials of certain comfort women (some whose stories had changed from their early versions), and a limited number of other sources (e.g., English-language documents, many by authors who cannot read or communicate fluently in Japanese). The vast majority of the historical documents on the Japanese comfort women system are in Japanese, but most of these salient documents were ignored, dismissed, or misinterpreted.

Was the Imperial Japanese military directly involved with comfort women brothels?

This aspect is a key point of contention, and misunderstood by many. The Japanese military interacted with civilian recruiters/agents/brothel owners to post advertisements seeking women to serve as comfort women. Proof of these ads is readily available (Ref. 3). Aggressive recruiters/agents, many of whom were Korean, would pursue women in poor families, tempting them or their parents with a lucrative job opportunity, where their debts would be paid off. The women would serve under terms defined in an agreement (often one to several years, depending on the amount of debt assumed by the broker). Unethically and immorally, some brokers did not explain the exact nature of the job. (This tactic is seen today where unscrupulous predators prey on the young and/or poor, saying that they have a great job opportunity for them).

With the case of comfort women, however, some were paid well (or their families had been paid) – although no amount of money could undo the deception by the recruiters/agents or the hardships suffered by the women. Once indentured or after joining, the women, along with the brothel owners/managers, were transported by the military, as the brothels needed to be located near the front lines. Most of the comfort women brothels were owned and run by civilians, often Koreans, and not by the Japanese military. Only a small fraction of comfort women stations were, in fact, directly operated by the military. The military did provide protection, medical services, transportation, and helped systematize business practices when brothel managers were found to be inept or inefficient (Ref. 2). The comfort women were seen by the military as essential for the well-being and morale of the soldiers; thus, the military would protect women from abusive brothel operators, as well as from soldiers who were unruly. The military also facilitated the return home of the comfort women when their obligations were met. So, in these types of capacities, the military was involved with most brothels.

As such, the Japanese military clearly was involved with comfort women brothels, recruiters, and brothel proprietors, facilitating and enabling their existence. However, the military neither systematically dragooned women to become comfort women, nor did they sanction the mistreatment of the women. Post-war Japanese governments have acknowledged the Imperial military's involvement, issued apologies, and supported the compensation of former comfort women. The Japanese government has endeavored to convey accurate history, wording its official statements carefully. Anti-Japanese groups have used Japan's fastidiousness to details and reluctance to admit to false accusations as proof that Japan is "insincere," "rewriting history," and "backtracking," when, in fact, it is the anti-Japanese groups who are attempting to rewrite history.

Do Japanese people deny the existence of comfort women?

Absolutely not. The Japanese people are well-informed on the history of comfort women. Many Japanese correctly believe that most comfort women were not kidnapped and were not treated as "slaves" reminiscent of antebellum America. Many believe that they were paid prostitutes, consistent with what was reported in the US Office of War Information document (Ref. 2), and that some of these women were deceived about the nature of their jobs, often by Korean recruiters (and not by the Japanese military).

Because of the deception by civilian recruiters, the fraction of women who were forced (e.g., those in Indonesia, Philippines), and the hardships endured by all comfort women, many Japanese feel remorse and sympathy for those who were forced to do things against their will. As such, Japan and Japanese apologized and paid compensation to former comfort women, and are willing to apologize and atone again, as Japanese Prime Minister Abe's government has demonstrated in December 2015.

Nevertheless, most Japanese (i.e., those in the political center and right) are chagrined over the world-wide spread of misinformation designed to elicit hatred toward Japan. Only Japanese left-wing elements (many of whom loathe the Japanese establishment and especially the current Abe-government) support the spread of exaggerated claims and comfort women memorials. Right-wing extremists in Japan, on the other hand, generally dismiss the suffering and the tragic circumstances of the comfort women, and see little difference between the comfort women brothels and the brothels or prostitutes used by other nations' militaries. Similarly, in America, there are those who push extreme views: some Americans promote the narrative that President Obama is a foreign-born Moslem, destroying America, while other Americans assert that former President Bush is a war criminal deserving of punishment.

Why doesn't what is written here match what is mentioned on websites and other reports?

Unfortunately, those writing about this topic in English are predominantly on the side demonizing Japan - at least at this time. Sadly, once seeds of misinformation have been sown, the misinformation can spread quickly: a false story is repeated in two reports, then each of these reports is cited in five others, etc.; thus, false information can spread exponentially, with a chance of becoming more exaggerated at each stage.

Proof of false information spreading is seen in the paper by Carmen Argibay appearing in a *legal* journal (9): She states, on p. 4, of Ref. (9), that "The OWI [US Office of War Information] Report also indicates that the women could not leave* the comfort stations even after they had fulfilled the terms of their contracts." (*emphasis added to point out her error) This statement is in contraction to what is actually written in the report, which states: "certain girls who had paid their debt could return home. Some of the girls were thus allowed to return to Korea." Argibay also mentions the women in Indonesia taken by the Japanese military, but she fails to disclose that were they released when a higher ranking officer discover this, about two months later. These critical errors completely change the narrative, and push a point-of-view not consistent with the overall facts. These types of errors or selective presentation of facts can be observed in many of books and documents related to comfort women (e.g., Coomaraswamy's 1996 U.N. report).

When documents related to mistreatment of comfort women are checked to identify the sources of the information, they generally lead back to the same small number of questionable, subjective, or inaccurate sources (e.g., Yoshida's book, mistaken newspaper articles, politicians making unsupported claims, and certain former comfort women, some of whom have changed their stories dramatically over time). No doubt, some (or many) comfort women were mistreated, but who were responsible (e.g., brothel operators – many of whom were Korean – or individual soldiers) and the true degree and magnitude of abuse are difficult to ascertain.

Is S. Korea hiding "skeletons in its closet"?

Sadly, yes. Ironically, the S. Korean government provided "comfort women" to United Nations troops during the Korean, as well as Vietnam, Wars. One hundred twenty two of

these former Korean comfort women sued the current S. Korean government in 2014 for recognition and compensation. (Ref. 7b)

The current President of S. Korea, Geun-Hye Park, has been suppressing news that will tarnish her image in any way. For instance, a Japanese reporter was indicted after writing an article that only cited what Korean media had reported, asking about President Park's whereabouts during a deadly ferry accident. (Ref. 8)

In addition, textbooks in S. Korea are controlled by the state, and have been cleansed of anything that puts a blemish on Korea or Koreans, while emphasizing negative aspects of Japan. S. Koreans have demanded that history books include all misconduct by Imperial Japan, but Korean textbooks have been whitewashed of all misconduct committed by S. Koreans. Ironically, S. Koreans are 'rewriting' history, as well as spreading misleading accounts against Japan. The hypocrisy and deceit are beyond comprehension to many; thus, many do not believe it possible. But, it is well-known that those who commit transgressions often accuse others of the very acts they, themselves, are committing.

During the Vietnam War, South Korea sent over 300,000 troops, as an ally of the US. These S. Korean forces systematically massacred innocent civilians, committed rapes, exploited prostitutes, and abandoned countless mixed children. Tens of thousands or more Vietnamese civilians (children, pregnant women, women, elderly, and men) were massacred, terrorized, and harmed by the forces of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) between 1966 and 1973, with massacres occurring at Binh An, Go Dai, Dien Nien, Phuoc Binh, Ha My, Binh Hoa, Phong Nhi, Tay Vinh, Vinh Xuan, and many other locations. (Ref. 7a) The S. Korean government has attempted to hide their war crimes from their own people and the rest of the world. Thus, most young Koreans are unaware of the atrocities committed by their own people.

Why are Japanese so upset about this issue?

In addition to distorting the facts by saying that *all* comfort women were abducted or forcibly recruited and horrifically treated as "slaves" by the Imperial Japanese military, the S. Korean government and some Koreans (and monument supporters) are ignoring the 1965 treaty between S. Korea and Japan, denying that Japan has apologized, and belittling the reparations made by Japan and Japanese. For many Japanese, S. Korea has reneged on the terms of the 1965 treaty that was negotiated in good faith and fulfilled by Japan. Many Japanese now feel that certain Korean groups (and their supporters) are conspiring to spread disinformation and fomenting worldwide hate toward Japan in the guise of supporting women's rights.

No matter how much Japan and Japanese have compromised and given in to please S. Korea in the past, some Japanese people now believe that certain individuals and groups will never be satisfied. Because of the disinformation being propagated, many Japanese people are upset and frustrated, and cannot understand why people in the West are ignoring Japan's pleas to investigate the facts in an objective and fair way, which would reveal that much of the narrative being disseminated in the West is exaggerated, subjective, or questionable.

Is there more to this story?

Yes, much more evidence exists, and many details have not been covered here. Most of the information, however, is written in Japanese; nevertheless, references (2) and (3a) are essential starting points for those interested in learning the facts.

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- (9) Carmen M. Argibay (2003), Berkeley Journal of International Law, vol 21, Issue 2, Article 6, pp. 375-389.